DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 223 754 UD 022 599

AUTHOR Lopez-Ramirez, Norma Iris
TITLE The Ecological Effects in Acculturation of Puerto Rican Migrants.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acculturation; *Adjustment (to Environment); Culture Conflict; English (Second Language); Environmental Influences; Hispanic Americans; *Individual Characteristics; Language Proficiency; *Migrants; *Psychological Patterns; *Puerto Ricans

ABSTRACT

Various studies discuss the influences on and effects of the process of adjustment to a new environment among Puerto Rican migrants to the United States mainland. In confronting cultural differences, Puerto Ricans may experience culture shock and identity problems and suffer disassociation leading to schizophrenia and hysteria, stress, frustration, feelings of hostility and loss, depression, other forms of mental disorder, possible suicide, and physical disorders. Puerto Ricans' adaptation and ability to cope in the new environment are significantly determined by the extent of their cultural assimilation and degree of English language proficiency. Furthermore, adaptation may be influenced by migrants' individual characteristics such as resilience and persistence, their educational backgrounds, and their occupational experiences. (Author/MJL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED223754

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Norma Iris López-Ramírez

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The Ecological Effects in Acculturation of Puerto Rican Migrants

Norma Iris López-Ramírez[1]

Centro de Estudios Sobre la Migración Puertorriqeña

The Pennsylvania State University

UD 022 599

[1] Ms. López-Ramírez, a USOE Doctoral Fellow at the Division of Curriculum and Instruction, is currently on leave from the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey.

The Ecological Effects in Acculturation of Puerto Rican Migrants

To study the migrant, it is necessary to narrow his relationship with the environment. As Pacheco, et al. (1980) stated, Piaget and his collaborators argued that the environment and the person play a crucial role in human development.

Pacheco et al. (1980) defines human being as a person that actively impose order and organization to his life and world, and who is aware of the limits of his world or physical, social and cultural environment.

The experience of change associated with occupational mobility, especially downward mobility, and assimilation may produce stresses adversely affecting the migrant's adjustment. According to Berry (1980) adaptation is a useful concept in the study of acculturation. Rogg and Cooney (1980) define adaptation to the broad process of change that migrants undergo as they develop strategies to cope with the new society.

The purpose of this report is to show that the migrant is involved in a process of change that is critical for him. The relationship between he and his environment and the ecological effects are the variables intervening in that process.

Migration inevitably involves changes and consequences in different places and environments. The person needs to adjust and adapt himself physically and socially to a different culture. Migration implies that the person must arrange himself to deal with a new life style which will be different to the one in which he had lived. Internal and external conflicts may emerge, adaptation to the new society,

customs, life style, climate, foods, etc.

According to Berry (1980) acculturation involves adaptation, and this refers to a variety of ways in which to reduce or stabilize conflict. Rogg and Cooney (1980) state that adaptation refers to the broad process of change that migrants undergo as they develop strategies to cope with the new society.

Berry (1980) states that acculturation is the culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. He suggests that there may be a characteristic three-phase course to acculturation: contact, person, conflict and adaptation. The first phase is necessary, the second is probable, and some form of the third is inevitable. Redfield, et al. (1936) defined acculturation as follows: acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups. According to Berry (1980) adaptation is a useful concept in the study of acculturation. If adaptation is viewed as the conduction of conflict, then the group and individual options taken to lessen acculturative conflict may be used to examine assessible variations in the third phase of acculturation. Three varieties or modes of adaptation are outlined: adjustment, reaction, and withdrawal. In adjustment, changes are made which reduce the conflict by making cultural or behavioral features more similar; homogenization or assimilation of one group into another are examples of such adjustment. In reaction, changes are made which attempt to

reduce the conflict by retaliating against the source of the conflict; native political organization or aggression are examples of such reaction. In withdrawal, changes are made which essentially remove one element from the contact arena; moving back to the reserve individual communities are examples of this mode. These three varieties of adaptation are similar to the distinctions in the psychological literature made between moving with or toward, moving against, and moving away from a stimulus.

Throughout the process of migration, the migrant is confronted to a new environment, a series of stages can be identified. Eisentadt (1954) identified the three stages of a process that occurs in the resocialization of the migrant person: (a) new skills are acquired, (b) acts in new roles, and (c) experiments changes in his self concept that involve the acquisition of new value. Eisentadt postulates that the degree of absorption to the new society can be evaluated by means of three criterias: (a) acculturation, the migrant learns new roles, norms and customs; (b) self adaptation, the signs of result adaptation are low signs of suicide, mental sickness, crime, delinquency, sudden changes in the family; and (c) institutional dispersion, the dispersion or concentration of migrants in the institutional spheres of society.

From Pacheco's results (1980) it is inferred that in the process of migration the life style of the individual is altered; interpersonal and familiar relations, self-concept, identity, and the perception of the physical and sociocultural environment are factors which are viewed and understood in a different way. Pacheco, et al. (1980) describe the migrant as a victim of environmental force that pushed him out of

his original environment and which pulled him to the new one.

According to studies made by Rogg and Cooney (1980), the thee assimilation variables--cultural assimilation, English language ability, and acquisition of U.S. citizenship--are very important in the adaptation and adjustment of Cubans in West New York. These factors are: (a) first variable, cultural assimilation, includes person's behavior as well as preference in such areas as language, food, music, dance, recreation, and celebration of important events; (b) second variable, English language ability, is not directly tapped by the above scale and refers to the respondents' self evaluation of their reading, writing, and speaking skills in English and their oral comprehension of the English language; (c) another aspect of the assimilation process that has received little attention in the literature, the acquisition of U.S. citizenship.

In the Puerto Rican migrants the first two variables are significant, but the third does not apply since the Puerto Rican family is structured differently from the American family. The Puerto Rican family is an extended family with strong ties. In the Puerto Rican family the children stay at home until they get married, whereas in American families adolescents often leave for college or jobs. According to Rendon (1974) for these reasons Puerto Rican adolescent migrants are under more stress than other adolescents, and this may partially explain their vulnerability. He points out that the Puerto Rican adolescent responds to this conflict with a typically predominant defense mechanism: disassociation. Disassociation is a phenomenom common to all mental disease in a way, but there are two main syndromes in which disassociation is paramount: schizophrenia and hysteria.

Sexuality is another area of value-conflict which is culturally determined. Virginity at marriage is still a preached command in the Puerto Rican family. Chaperons are still an institution in some of these families to secure that growing girls are closely watched. Rendon (1974) argues that all of these are transcultural aspects of Puerto Rico that are in conflict in the Puerto Rican migrants; and diassociative phenomena may be misdiagnosed as schizophrenia because of lack of understanding of cultural differences.

Rendon, as quoted by Stack (1980), discusses the impact of migration on suicide and how the culture shock of migration is associated to suicide. He suggests that the stress, frustration, and feelings of uprootedness often associated with long distance migration contributes to suicide.

Oberg, as quoted by Arredondo-Dowd (1981), introduced the term "culture shock" as a factor that may be generating feelings of loss. He proposed five stages in the process of culture shock for a sojourner that may also be considered with respect to inmigrants. The stages are: (a) one feels euphoria about the exciting new culture, (b) normal daily activities seem more like crisis. As a result, sojourners direct feelings of hostility toward those around them. This is a period of psychological transition from back-home values to host-home values where failure to succeed can lead to extreme dissatisfaction with the host culture. (c) Persons begin to understand the host culture and feel more in touch with themselves. (d) The host culture is viewed as offering both positive and negative alternatives. (e) The sojourner returns home and experiences reverse culture shock in readjustment.

Rendom (1974) in his study of epidemiology indicates that mental illness is considerably high among Puerto Ricans in New York. He presents that the transculturation of Puerto Ricans to New York implies learning a different language and adjusting to different roles and values.

Rogler and Hollinghead (1975) reconstructed the migratory history of persons in Puerto Rico who were diagnosed as nonpsychotic and persons diagnosed as schizophrenic to examine the possible relationship between geographic movement and severe mental health problems. Carrillo (1980) outlines geographic economic and political reasons for inmigration and related them to psychological services for inmigrants and the role of mental health.

According to Malzberg (1962), in a study of differential incidence of mental disease among White internal migrants and non-migrants, mentioned that migrants had an average annual standardized rate of 171.9 per 100,000 population, compared with 135.4 for non-migrants. The most significant excess was with respect to dementia praecox. Such average annual standardized rates were 53.9 per 100,000 migrants and 35.4 for non-migrants. He concluded that White migrants had a higher incidence of mental illness than non-migrants in New York State.

Wong-Valle (1981) presents a hypothesis that an inmigrant goes through stages of individualization--separation similar to the one experienced by an infant during individualization and separation from the mother. The immigrant, like the infant, must pass through a process of acculturation. She discusses the symptoms of chronic depression that Puerto Rican immigrants exhibit. Eppink (1979) discusses the reason why

migrant children are underprivileged in comparison with children of the host country, even those from the lower classes, is that their parents are not sufficiently familiar with either language or the education system of the host country to give their children the stimulation and additional support they need. Eppink (1979) indicates the symptoms of psychological disturbance in migrants. Such as homesickness, agitation, tension, irritability, restlessness, loss of appetite, loss of weight, sleep disorders, digestive complaints, headaches, palpitations, and muscle cramps. Most of these symptoms are associated to the influence of stress on the hormone system.

Kabela, as quoted by Eppink (1979), found cases of Spanish children shortly after migrating suffering from inhibitions, dejection, sleeplessness, and poor appetite. Oeztek, as quoted by Eppink (1979), discusses and measured the physical symptoms, such as: high fever, coughing ear discharge, diarrhea, and askarriosis. According to Arredondo-Dowd (1981), Handlin (1951), Namias (1978), and Sowell (1978) the immigrant experience suggests that the change causes both exhilaration and pain.

According to Burchfield (1979) the organisms are genetically predisposed to adapt to stress. The pattern of adaptation consists of a conditioned endocrine response before the stressor is presented and a decrease in arousal during the stress. These changes occur because the organisms are predisposed to learn cues predictive of stress and to assess the threat potential of the stressor. This pattern is adaptive because it conserves resources and promotes homeostasis.

Rogg and Cooney (1980) summarize several studies (Malzberg and Lee,

Abramson, Shoham and Abd-El Razek, Chu) about the relationship between migration and mental stress. Rogg and Cooney (1980) remark that for international migrants, like the Cubans, the stress related to learning and adapting to a new economic environment is compounded by the stress related to learning and adapting to a new cultural environment.

In agreement with the aforementioned, Verdonk (1979) stated that the relations between migration and mental illness are complex. The term migration in itself is an abstraction that encompasses several variables, such as geographical distance and amount and quantity of change in the environment of the mover. According to Morrison (1973), it is not correct to assume that rates of mental illness should be higher for migrants than for non-migrants. Jaco (1960) found no difference in the incidence of schizophrenia between migrants and non-migrants.

Canino (1980) summarizes and claims that many studies have examined the relationship between migration and mental illness. The result of these studies lack uniformity. How social processes are related to mental illness is understood only imperfectly, although the discontinuities between the characteristics of the migrants' point of origin and those of the point of destination appear to be of considerable importance in projecting the stressors to which migrants are exposed. Movement into new and unfamiliar environments appears to increase susceptibility need not be immediately apparent after the transition and may not occur at all, but the risk of increased susceptibility is present.

A variable element of geographical distance as well as an element of amount of quality of change in the environment of the mover is

implied in these migrations (McKinley, 1975). In general terms, the more alike the source and host communities are in culture and social structure, the less profound the effects will be for the mover. Toffler and Packard, as quoted by Arredondo-Down (1981), report that moving to a new geographical location is a change in life that creates a sense of loss.

Stein (1979) indicates that this pattern of loss from high social class positions and gain from low social class positions found among Cubans is similar to the occupational transitions of other refugee groups in the United States. The loss of occupational status is often severe, resulting in dissatisfaction over the lack of opportunity to use skills and knowledge. (Murphy, 1955; Cirtantas, 1963; Schechtman, 1963)

Schulz (1979) presents a theoretical conception for the development of stress. He argues that stress exists if an attempt is made to reduce an emotionally stressing uncertainty by inadequate coping behavior. The imbalance between environmental demands and performance capacities is the precondition for the genesis of stress.

Arredondo-Down (1981) speculates that immigration is a process that stimulates mixed and varied responses at unpredictable periods of time. Some of the responses in the adaptation process, migrants develop strategies of coping with the new society. This is an important aspect of this broad process of change in assimilation.

Reuchlin (1978) proposes a psychological model that admits the existence of multiple, alternative processes for the adaptation of an individual to a situation. These processes do not always have the same

efficiency in a given situation, and they are not all performed by an individual with the same ease. Margalef (1969) refers to two kinds of stability: persistence and adjustment stability.

Triandis (1980) proposes another framework for considering how minority persons adjust in a majority society. Triandis (1980) identifies three major variables--cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills--that may determine the adaptation of persons living in an environment where the language and culture is not their own. Triandis (1980) points out that the adjustment requires the development of skills, such as fluency in language and appropriate behavior in another culture.

Winterhalder (1980) states that Holling defines two properties to describe fluctuation in state variables. Stability refers to the ability of a system to return to an equilibrium state after a temporary disturbance; the less the fluctuation and the more rapid the return, the more stable the system. Stability assesses the degree of fluctuation about an equilibrium. Resilience, on the other hand, determines the persistence of relationships within a system; it measures the ability of a system to absorb perturbations and yet maintain defined relationships among variables.

Slobodkin and Rapoport (1974) analyze the process of adaptive responses to environmental events using game theory, with the special condition that persistence is the only appropriate evolutionary goal. Good adaptations in this view are those that allow the organism to minimize its chance of extinction when responding appropriately to an environmental perturbation (stress).

The person-environment relationship suffers a dramatic change with the capability to impact adversely the process of human development and to modify the environment. (Pacheco, et al., 1980) As Nieves-Falcon (1975) states, the migration affects the person-environment relationship drastically.

According to Pacheco et al. (1980), Wapner and his collaborators elaborate a theory of the relation between the person and the environment that surrounds him. This relationship has a process character and it is designated as interactions or transactions between the person and the environment. So, the process in which the migrant is involved is an interactional one between him and his surroundings.

Winterhalder (1980) points out that the environmental factors provide significant, causative agents affecting human evolution and adaptation.

Individuals in a population adjust to spatial and temporal variations in environment by numerous morphological, physiological, and behavioral mechanisms.

Studies of immigrant groups have generally shown that immigrants with higher education and higher occupational achievements are more assimilated.

The following implications demonstrate some of the ecological effects on the acculturation or adaptation of migrants. A snail and other mollusk who develop a shell to protect themselves from climate, just as migrants have to adapt to climate change by wearing heavier clothes.

A walking stick which changes its color to camouflage and protect itself from other animals. Men in the Army used to wearing camouflage cloth to protect themselves from the enemy. Migrants too change their life style and customs in order to adapt to the new society.

In conclusion, a factor affecting the migrant is in some occasions the lack of knowledge about the new environment. For example, about schools, recreation, transportation, customs, savings method in banks, and others. Another factor is that migrants suffer major consequences when speaking a foreign language, new customs, values, and different life styles. The changing habitat of the individual modifies the physical environment (climatological patterns, visual concepts or scenery), socio-cultural aspects (values, beliefs, customs), access to different agencies and interpersonal (neighbors, friends).

References

Arredondo-Dowd, P. M. Personal Loss and Grief as a Result of Immigration. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1981, 59 (6), 376-378.

Berry, J. W. Acculturation as varieties of adaptation. In Padilla, A. M. (Ed.), Acculturation theory, models and some new findings. Westview Press, Bowlden Co., 1980.

Burchfield, S. R. The stress response: A new perspective. Psychosomatic Medicine, 1979, 41 (8), 661-672.

Canino, I. A.; Earley, B. F.; & Rogler, L. H. The Puerto Rican child in New York City: Stress and mental health. Monographs of the Hispanic research center - Fordham University, 1980, (no. 4).

Carrillo, C. (Mission Community Mental Health Center, San Francisco, CA) Services to Mesoamerican Immigrants: Psycho-social Issues. Clinical Psychologist, 1980, 34 (1), 21-22.

Eisenstadt, S. W. The absorption of immigrants. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954.

Eppink, A. Socio-psychological problems of migrant children and cultural conflicts. Internation Migration, 1979, 17, 87-119.

Jaco, E. G. Social Epidemiology of Mental Disorders. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1960.

Malzberg, B. Migration and mental disease among the white population of New York State, 1949-1951. Human Biology, 1962, 34, 89-98.

Margalef, R. Diversity and stability: A practical proposal and a model of interdependence. Brookhaven Symposia in Biology, 1969, 22, 25-37.

McKinley, J. B. Some Issues Associated With Migration, Health Status and the Use of Health Service. Journal Chron. Dis., 1975, 28, 579-592.

Morrison, S. D. Intermediate Variables in the Association Between Migration and Mental Illness. International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 1973, 19, 60-65.

Nieves-Falcoñ, L. El emigrante puertorriqueño. Río Piedras: Edil, 1975.

Pacheco, A. M.; Lucca, N.; & Wagner, S. La migración como una transición crítica para la persona en su ambiente: Una interpretación ción organismico evolutiva. (Migration as a critical person-in-environment transition: An organismic-developmental interpretation.) University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras, 1980. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 200668)

Padilla, A. M. (Ed.) Acculturation theory, models and some new findings. Westview Press, Bowlder Co., 1980.

Peck, E. C. The Relationship of Disease and Other Stress to Second Language. International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 1974, 20 (1,2), 128-133.

Redfield, R.; Linton, R.; & Herskovits, M. J. Memorandum on the study of acculturation. American Anthropologist, 1936, 38, 149-152.

Rendon, M. Transcultural Aspects of Puerto Rican mental illness in New York. International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 1974, 20 (1,2), 18-24.

Reuchlin, M. Vicariat Processes and Individual Differences. Journal de Psychologie Normale et Pathologique, 1978, 75 (2), 133-145.

Rogg, E. M.; & Cooney, R. S. Adaptation and adjustment of Cubans: West New York, New Jersey. Monographs of the Hispanic Research Center - Fordham University, 1980, (no. 5).

Rogler, L. H. & Hollingshead, A. B. Trapped: Families and Schizophrenia. New York: Krieger Publishing Company, 1975.

Schulz, P. Behavioral regulation and disregulation: Stress as a product of disregulation. Psychologische Beitrage, 1979, 21 (3,4), 597-621.

Slobodkin, L. B. & Rapoport, A. An optimal strategy of evolution. Quarterly Review of Biology, 1974, 49, 181-200.

Stack, S. The Effects of Interstate Migration on Suicide. International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 1980, 26 (1), 17-26.

Stein, B. N. Occupational Adjustment of Refugees: The Vietnamese in the United States. International Migration Review, 1979, 14, 25-45.

Triandis, H. C. A theoretical framework for the study of bilingual-bicultural adaptation. International Review of Applied Psychology, 1980, 29 (1,2), 7-16.

Verdonk, A. Migration and Mental Illness. International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 1979, 25 (4), 295-305.

Winterhalder, B. Environmental analysis in human evolution and adaptation research. Human Ecology, 1980, 8 (2), 135-170.

Wong-Valle, E. Art therapy as a tool in the acculturation of the immigrant mental patient. Pratt Institute Creative Arts Therapy Review, 1981, 2, 46-51.